



The MAID of the FOREST

By RANDALL PARRISH

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SYNOPSIS.

Joseph Hayward, an ensign in the United States Army, on his way to Fort Harker, meets Simon Gray, a renegade whose name has been connected with all manner of atrocities since the fall of Fort Harker. With a message from the British general, Hamilton, Hayward guides him to the fort. At General Harker's headquarters Hayward meets Rene Wyandott, who professes to recognize him, although he has no recollection of ever having seen her before. Hayward volunteers to carry a message for Harker to Mandan, where Hamilton is stationed. The northwest Indian tribes are ready for war and are only held back by the refusal of the friendly Wyandott to join. The latter is demanding the return of Wapato-tah, a religious teacher, whom they believe to be a prisoner. Hayward's mission is to assure the Wyandott that the man is not held by the soldiers. Rene asks Hayward to let her accompany him. She tells him that she is a quarter-blood Wyandott and a missionary among the Indians. She has been in search of her father. She insists that she has seen Hayward before, but in a British uniform. Hayward refuses her request and starts for the north, accompanied by a scout named Brady and a private soldier. They come on the trail of a war party and to escape from the Indians take shelter in a hut on an island. Hayward finds a murdered man in the hut. It proves to be Rene Wyandott, a former French officer who is called by the Wyandott "white chief." Rene appears and Hayward is puzzled by her insistence that they have met before. Rene recognizes the murdered man as her father, who was known among the Indians as Wapato-tah. She tells Hayward her father was killed from the French court and had spent his life among the Indians as a missionary. Brady reports seeing a band of marauding Indians in the vicinity and with them Simon Gray. Brady's evidence convinces the girl that there is a British officer by the name of Hayward, who resembles the American. They find escape from the island out.

CHAPTER X.—Continued.

Brady flung forward his rifle, yet hesitated, fearing to fire. Whatever it might be—animal or man—the thing was coming directly toward us, swimming with long, stringy locks of wet hair dangling to the shoulders. It was a man beyond doubt, yet for the instant I could not determine whether red or white. As he stood there sunk to his armpits in water, he beheld us for the first time, and there burst from his lips a sudden, guttural exclamation of alarm. With the strange sound Schultz leaped forward, lumbering against me as he passed, and splashed his way out toward the fellow, uttering some exclamation in his native tongue. He reached him, the two voices greeting each other.

"Well!" exclaimed Brady in disgust. "If it ain't another Dutchman. Come in here, you!"

The two waded ashore onto the sand. Schultz's heavy hand grasping his companion's arm, and helping him along. I saw a face white and ghastly in the starlight, lean, smooth-shaven, looking emaciated against the long, dark hair, the eyes bright with fanaticism. He was a tall, spare man, shaking so he could hardly stand. The very sight of him aroused my sympathy.

"Don't be afraid," I said soothingly. "We're all white. How did you come here?"

His eyes looked at me as I spoke; then shifted to Schultz's face in silent questioning. The latter was breathing hard, but managed to explain.

"He not talk English ver' good, myn-heer. I tell you vat he say mit me—he was a Dutch preacher; yaw, mine Gott; just over py mine own country; he was named Adrian Block."

"Did he swim all the way?" asked Brady grinning, but Schultz kept his eyes fastened on me, held by the one thought to which he sought to give utterance.

"He was Moravian, mynheer; vat you call missionary—so? He von month in does country, an' know only to preach."

The girl leaning forward, interrupted with a whisper:

"I recognize the man, monsieur; he was the prisoner I told you of in the Indian camp—the Protestant."

"They left him only mit one guard, an' after while, der fellow he fall asleep. Den he got loose mid his bonds, an' creep down mit der shore of der lake where a boat was. So he drift out on der water; but der boat leak, an' go down, leaving him mit nothing. Dot vat it, mynheer. Den he swim some an' pray mooch, an' so com' here mit us, already."

"Where did the Indians go?"

"Up mit der lake shore—so like dis," waving his hand.

"All of them? The two white men also?"

Schultz repeated the question, and Block answered, never once removing his eyes from mademoiselle.

"He know not what became of der little man; he see him not for long while, but der big man he go mit der Indians—yaw, he tells dem der way, an' talk all der time."

"We have got the situation clear enough," concluded Brady, coolly.

"Whoever that red-coat is, he evidently knows the best way to this island,

and the fix we're in. So far as I can see there is nothing left us but to fight. We can't get away now; the boat is useless, and those Indians have blocked the ford. That's exactly where they are now, watchin' fer us to attempt to cross. The only question is: Where can we hold out the longest? I'm fer goin' back to the house."

"And I also," I said, deciding instantly, and as quickly assuming command. "There is small chance of our holding out long against those fellows, but we'll do the best we can. What about you, mademoiselle?"

"I go with you," she answered quietly.

"Against your own people?"

"Those are not my people! They are outlaws, renegades, led by the murderer of my father."

"Then let us go back; every moment lost will count against us. Pick up the packs. Brady, you lead off; Schultz, take care of the preacher and keep his tongue still."

The house was exactly as we left it, a few red embers on the hearth alone shedding spectral light about the main room, as we groped our way forward. There were heavy wooden bars to fit across the doors, and I secured these as soon as I deposited my pack on the floor.

"Mademoiselle," I said, staring about at the blank walls in some perplexity. "You know this place better than any of us; surely it was not erected here in the wilderness without some provision for defense in case of attack. Are those walls solid?"

"No, monsieur; they were made tight, so no gleam of light would ever show without, but there are gunports here—see."

She slipped aside a small wooden shutter, fitted ingeniously between the logs, revealing an opening sufficient for a rifle barrel.

"There are four along this wall, and as many opposite. At the rear you must stand on the bench, so as to fire above the shed roof."

"Leave that preacher alone, and open them up, Schultz," I commanded sharply. "There is not light enough here now to show without. Now, Brady, see if there are any extra guns in the shack, or ammunition. Lay everything out where convenient. A rifle? Good! We'll give that to our Moravian friend; he may be opposed to war on principle, but, by all the gods! he'll fight now, if Schultz can pound the truth into him. What is that, mademoiselle? Powder and ball in the big chest; show Brady where it is. This isn't going to be such a one-sided affair after all. Five of us, counting Block, who may not know which end of the gun to point. I am going to scout outside and see when those fellows cross over."

Brady shaded his eyes to stare across at me through the gloom.

"You'd better let me go."

"No; I'll try it alone; get everything ready, and leave the bar down."

"You will be careful, monsieur?"

There was an unspoken note of anxiety in the voice that caused me to glance back at her quickly in surprise.

"Be assured of that, mademoiselle."

I returned. "I know the duty of an ally," and stepped without, closing the door behind me.

CHAPTER XI.

I Fight a Red-Coat.

Convinced that my coming had not been perceived, and that no Indian scouts were watching the cabin, I pressed forward into the depths of the woods, obliged to proceed slowly because of the darkness. So cautious was I, lest some noise might betray my presence, that I was some moments in passing through the fringe of trees to where I could obtain view of the lake, and the dark line of shore opposite.

I had advanced for perhaps a hundred yards, passing beyond where we had attained land the evening before, when I suddenly came to a halt, sinking to my knees, and staring forward across a slight opening in the forest growth. At first I was not sure that what I saw was actually a man, but as the object moved toward me, all doubt vanished. He was not only a man, but a white man; at least he was not clothed as an Indian; and, as he stepped forth into the open, more clearly revealed for an instant, I could have sworn that he wore a uniform coat, with buttons that gleamed dully in the twilight. He looked a giant, a great, hulking outline, but stepped lightly enough, not the slightest sound betraying his cat-like movements as he came steadily onward, with head bent forward, his rifle advanced. I

felt sure of his identity almost at once; surely he could be no other than the British agent, whom mademoiselle held guilty of her father's murder, the man who masqueraded under my own name. I felt my blood grow hot with anger. He would pass within a yard of me; he was alone, seeking his way, endeavoring to plan how he should lead his savages to an assault. If I could get him it would be half the battle.

I watched him closely, peering about the smooth bark of the tree, one foot advanced ready for a spring. Some instinct of wild life must have told him of my presence, for he stopped still, peering about suspiciously, his rifle flung forward. I dared not delay, yet swift as I was, his quick eye caught my movement. The gun butt swinging through the air met his rifle barrel, slid along the steel, and struck a glancing blow. He recoiled back, dazed, half stunned, dropping his own weapon, yet seizing the muzzle of mine to keep from falling. I endeavored to jerk it free, but he hung to it desperately. Scarce knowing how it was done, we were together, grappling each other, the disputed gun kicked aside under our feet.

He swore once, a mad English oath, but I choked it back, clutching his throat in iron grip, straining to force him to the fulcrum of my knee. Then he found grasp of my hair, hurling my head back until the agony compelled me to let go. I struck him square in the face, a blow that would have dropped an ordinary man, but he only snarled, and closed in, grappling my wrist with one hand, the other fumbling for a knife at his belt. By God's mercy I got it first; yet could not strike, for he had me foul, gripped to him as if held in a vise. I could feel the muscles of his chest, the straining sinews of his arms as they crushed me. I gave back, down, my limbs trembling beneath the force with which he flung the whole weight of his body against mine. I had met my match, and I knew it. Yet the knowledge gave me fresh strength, fiercer determination. The very conception of defeat crazed me; my brain held no thought save a mad impulse to conquer him, show him who was the better man!

I wrenched aside, breaking that strange hold by sheer strength and wrestling skill. Again we grappled, face to face, our muscles straining as we sought advantage of hold. My hunting shirt gave, tearing apart like brown paper, giving up a scant second as his grasp slipped. It was enough, I had him locked at my hip; yet strain as I would his weight baffled every effort. Back and forth we struggled, crushing the bushes under foot, our breath coming in sobs, every muscle aching under the awful strain. Neither dared loosen a finger grip. Our eyes glared into each other with savage hate. How it would have ended God knows, had the fellow not slipped on the brush root, so that the added weight of my body flung him headlong. Even as he went over, bearing me along with him, his head crashing into the side of a tree as he fell, his lips gave vent to one wild cry. Then he lay still, motionless, a huge black shape outstretched on the ground in the ghastly light of dawn.

I got to my knees, scarcely realizing what had happened, peering down into the upturned face, one hand raised to strike if the man moved. There was not a motion. I bent lower—the eyes were closed, blood dripped from his hair. I turned the head, so as to better perceive the features—surely this was not the man for whom I had been mistaken! He was big enough, but marked by dissipation, and wore a black moustache. As I live there was not a resemblance. Who was he then? I got to my feet and searched out my rifle in the tangled brush. Some noise reached me—the splash of water, the echo of a far-off voice. They were coming, the Indians; they had heard his last cry; they were already crossing the ford. I hesitated an instant, staring down at him, listening intently that I might be sure, then turned and ran swiftly toward the clearing. It was already gray dawn, and even in the dense woods I could see to avoid the trees. Behind me rang out a wild whoop of savagery; they had discovered the body! I glanced back across my shoulder, as I ran; burst forth into the clearing, and, reckless of all else, raced for the house. I fell once, my foot slipping on a hummock, but was up instantly, plunged at the door, and leaped within. Brady caught me, thrust the wooden bars down into their sockets, and half dragged me over to the bench.

"What is it?" are they coming?" he asked.

It was darker in there than outside, and I could barely perceive his face.

"Yes," I panted. "They are just behind me. I—I had to run for it. Get—get to the stations; I'll—I'll tell you later what happened out there."

He left me, and my eyes, accustomed themselves to the gloom, began to discern objects in the room. I got to my feet, still breathing heavily from exhaustion, yet with brain active. Brady was close beside me, kneeling on the floor, his eye at an opening between the logs.

"See anything?"

"There are figures moving at the edge of the wood," he answered, without glancing around, "but they don't come out so I can tell what they look like. The way your clothes are torn you must have had a fight!"

"I did—with the big fellow in a red jacket. He's lying out there with a cracked skull. That is why those fellows don't know what to do—they're short a leader."

I got to my feet, and stared about, seeking mademoiselle. She was beyond the table, and our eyes met.

"You—you killed him, monsieur?"

"I do not know; I threw him, his head struck against a tree, and he lay still. I had to run; only he was not your man, mademoiselle; he looked no more like me than you do."

"You—you are sure?"

"Yes; I saw his face. It was lighter out there, and he lay flat on his back. He was big enough, if anything larger even than I am, and gave me a fight for it until his foot slipped. He had black hair and moustache, and his face was full of purple veins. He looked French to me."

"Yet wore a red coat?"

"Ay! and swore in English, the one oath I heard. You know anyone like that?"

There was a shot without, and the chug of a ball as it struck against the logs; then another, and Brady's voice tense with strain:

"They're goin' to try it, an' ther's sure some Indians out ther; the whole edge o' the woods is alive with 'em. Get ready now! This ain't goin' to be no slouch o' a fight."

I sprang across to the nearest opening, yet stopped to be sure of the arrangement within. The gray light stealing in through the small firing holes failed to give distinct view across the room.

"Where are you Schultz?"

"Here mit der front."

"Oh, all right; what has become of your friend?"

"He vas to load; he do dot, but not fight. Maybe dot help some, don't it?" I saw the man then, his white face showing dimly, and before him three rifles lying across the table.

"You found more guns?"

Brady glanced aside to answer.

"The girl did; she knew where they were—ah! now the rumpus has begun!"

Reports, blending almost in a volley, sounded without, the thud of lead striking the logs in dull echo. One stray ball found entrance, splintered an edge of the bench, and flattened out against the stone chimney. I dropped to one knee, my eyes at the opening.

CHAPTER XII.

We Meet Them With Rifles.

Small as my peek hole was, just large enough to admit a rifle barrel, it yet afforded clear view to east and south of the house. As I gazed, striving to determine what the various movements meant, and from which direction to anticipate final attack, an Indian crept out into the open, crawling on his stomach like a snake through the grass. Others followed, until a dozen wrangling forms began to advance inch by inch, hugging the ground so closely I could scarcely perceive their movement. I heard a slight sound within, as Brady quietly thrust forward his rifle.

"Wait a moment," I called to him, not venturing to glance about, but holding up one hand in warning. "It is a long shot yet, and we must make every one tell. Wait until the first fellow is half across; then pick your man. Who is at the loophole beyond us?"

"It is I, monsieur."

"You, mademoiselle! Hadn't you better let Schultz take that place?"

"An' why, monsieur?—thy soft voice cooly indignant. 'Am I afraid? Am I unable to shoot? Why should I not stay?'"

"Those are Indians," I began, "I thought—"

"Hah! My people! Those robbers and cowards. I told you there is no Wyandott among them. You will see, monsieur."

"All right then, I take that first one, and you pick the two to the left. Fire when I give the word. Schultz lay out one of those extra guns beside each of us. Ready now; the fellows who are not hit will jump and run for the woods as soon as we fire; give them a second shot before they can reach cover."

"Ready now!" I commanded sharply. "Let them have it—fire!"

(TO BE CONTINUED)

When a man marries, he wants an angel; then, after the honeymoon, he grows because he didn't get a cook.

"CASCARETS" FOR SLUGGISH BOWELS

No sick headache, sour stomach, biliousness or constipation by morning.

Get a 10-cent box now.

Turn the rascals out—the headache, biliousness, indigestion, the sick, sour stomach and foul gases—turn them out to night and keep them out with Cascarets.

Millions of men and women take a Cascaret now and then and never know the misery caused by a lazy liver, clogged bowels or an upset stomach.

Don't put in another day of distress. Let Cascarets cleanse your stomach; remove the sour, fermenting food; take the excess bile from your liver and carry out all the constipated waste matter and poison in the bowels. Then you will feel great.

A Cascaret to night straightens you out by morning. They work while you sleep. A 10-cent box from any drug store means a clear head, sweet stomach and clean, healthy liver and bowel action for months. Children love Cascarets because they never gripe or sicken. Adv.

A Puzzler.

The type of youth who indulges in loud clothes and a hat forced back over his ears dropped into the dental chair.

"I'm afraid to give him gas," said the dentist to his assistant.

"Why?"

"How can I tell when he's unconscious?"—Philadelphia Public Ledger.

WHEN KIDNEYS ACT BAD TAKE GLASS OF SALTS.

Eat Less Meat if Kidneys Hurt or You Have Backache or Bladder Misery—Meat Forms Uric Acid.

No man or woman who eats meat regularly can make a mistake by flushing the kidneys occasionally, says a well-known authority. Meat forms uric acid which clogs the kidney pores so they sluggishly filter or strain only part of the waste and poisons from the blood, then you get sick. Nearly all rheumatism, headaches, liver trouble, nervousness, constipation, dizziness, sleeplessness, bladder disorders come from sluggish kidneys.

The moment you feel a dull ache in the kidneys or your back hurts, or if the urine is cloudy, offensive, full of sediment, irregular of passage or attended by a sensation of scalding, get about four ounces of Jad Salts from any reliable pharmacy and take a tablespoonful in a glass of water before breakfast for a few days and your kidneys will then act fine. This famous salt is made from the acid of grapes and lemon juice, combined with lithia and has been used for generations to flush clogged kidneys and stimulate them to activity, also to neutralize the acids in urine so it no longer causes irritation, thus ending bladder disorders.

Jad Salts is inexpensive and cannot injure; makes a delightful effervescent lithia-water drink which all regular meat eaters should take now and then to keep the kidneys clean and the blood pure, thereby avoiding serious kidney complications.—Adv.

Tight.

"He's close-fisted, isn't he?"

"I should say he is! Why, man, he won't even give up any of his bad habits."

The meek may inherit the earth some day, but the other fellow has a mortgage on it right now.

Red Cross Bag Blue makes the laundress happy, makes clothes whiter than snow. All good grocers. Adv.

If a man marries a widow it's because she originated the thought.



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It is vitally necessary therefore, that you take good care of your skin.

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